

Recommendations

Michigan urgently needs to improve the way students are prepared for the world awaiting them. Enhancing teaching and learning about Asia is central to this task.

Strategies to motivate teaching and learning about Asia in Michigan schools offered by the Michigan Commission on Asia in the Schools are presented in the following areas:

- **Expanding Educational Quality**
- **Enhancing Teacher Preparation, Professional Development, and Resources**
- **Enlisting State Leadership and Community Support**

Enhancing Educational Quality

Michigan students must be exposed to instructional material on Asia and other world regions and languages beginning in elementary and middle school to increase their knowledge about diverse cultures and languages. More guidance for teachers on Michigan's standards and benchmarks should be provided regarding the concepts students should master at different grade levels on Asia. Language offerings should include languages spoken in the Asian region. Schools should find opportunities to use Asian-American community resources and international businesses to teach these languages.

Potential First Steps

- Develop rigorous standards for what our teachers and our students should know about Asian-related subjects.
- Incorporate Asian-related instruction into strengthened standards and benchmarks using the Web-based SCoPE and MI CLiMB tools offered by the State of Michigan.
- Encourage the infusion of Asian content in all subject areas, such as using examples of Asian literature and history.
- Assess students' knowledge of Asian subject matter periodically through state assessment exams.
- Increase opportunities for elementary students to study a second language and continue that same language throughout middle and high school.

Expanding Teacher Preparation, Professional Development and Resources

Teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities should include coursework in Asian and international subjects. Schools should seek teachers who are prepared for teaching Asian and international subject matter.

Teacher professional development workshops and seminars should assist teachers in gaining more confidence in teaching about Asia and provide strategies to infuse Asian and international subject matter into existing curricula.

National Resource Centers and other international educational organizations should work with teachers to design effective resource materials, professional development courses, and appropriate student activities.

Potential First Steps

- Assist teachers by providing courses and resources to help teachers meet enhanced standards on Asian-related studies in their classrooms.
- Approach a National Resource Center to work on a joint project with an intermediate school district curriculum specialist to develop and maintain Web-based resource guides for teachers on a particular topic.
- Design Web-based guides for teachers on Asian and international subjects.
- Develop virtual travel trips and related student activities to teach teachers and their students about Asian languages and cultures.
- Establish formal networks linking international experts, native speakers, and teachers.
- Establish Web-based peer-to-peer teacher and educational professional networks to facilitate interaction on Asian-related topics.

Enlisting State Leadership and Community Support

Ensuring State Leadership

To realize the vision of this Commission, strong state commitment and leadership is imperative. Educators, policymakers, and parents should be informed about the importance of producing high school graduates competent in Asian languages and Asian and international affairs.

Potential First Steps

- Assign responsibility for implementing this Commission's recommendations to a permanent state office or agency.
- Convene a task force including members from the educational community, National Resource Centers, Asian-American and other ethnic communities, business groups, and government. This task force should develop a plan for one or more organizations, public or private, that would promote increased Asian and international studies in Michigan schools.
- Adopt the University of Michigan's and Michigan State University's National Resource Centers' proposals to lead a project to link educators and students with sources and materials while the task force completes its work and a permanent organization is established.
- Call on community leaders to speak and write about the importance of teaching and learning about Asia and other world regions.

Engaging Community Support

Leaders from business and industry, the media, youth organizations, cultural and religious associations, and Asian and Asian-American community groups should collaborate with educators and play an active role in educating Michigan students about Asia and its many cultures.

Potential First Steps

- Encourage the media to play an instrumental role in communicating the importance of teaching and learning about Asia to their audiences; write editorials and letters about this topic for general publications.
- Ask the business community to support Asian and international studies in schools by providing leadership and financial support.
- Encourage parents and students to participate in such programs as the Rotary Youth Exchange program and the Michigan 4-H international exchange and promote the development of additional student exchange programs to give students more opportunities for hands-on experiences with Asian and other cultures.
- Develop briefing materials to inform decision makers about the need for more emphasis on Asian studies in schools.